

NOEL STREATFEILD

The Circus is Coming

ILLUSTRATED BY
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PENGUIN BOOKS

Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex
CANADA: Penguin Books (Canada) Ltd, 47 Green Street,
Saint Lambert, Montreal, P.Q.
AUSTRALIA: Penguin Books Pty Ltd, 762 Whitehorse Road,
Mitcham, Victoria
SOUTH AFRICA: Penguin Books (S.A.) Pty Ltd, Gibraltar House,
Regent Road, Sea Point, Cape Town

Made and printed in Great Britain
by Hunt, Barnard & Co, Ltd,
Aylesbury

CONTENTS

1. AUNT REBECCA	9
2. THE CHRISTMAS CARD	15
3. ESCAPE	25
4. THE BUILD-UP	39
5. SETTLING IN	52
6. IN THE STABLES	71
7. THE CIRCUS	85
8. SCHOOL	109
9. THE PULL-DOWN	130
10. SANTA'S VIOLIN	151
11. THE RIDING LESSON	169
12. PARADE	184
13. 'MIS'	204
14. MAKING PLANS	218
15. GUS'S BIRTHDAY	226
16. GUS SPEAKS	245
17. THE END OF TENTING	259

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

They lived slut up in the Battersea house	12
It was all so bustling and smelt so good	30
'Well - what are you two up to?'	34
'You know to me those dogs aren't dogs But clever!'	79
They had difficult things for a pony to do	100
'Hide your kimon in your hand and don't use it till we tell you'	122
Gus was sitting nonchantly on the trapeze doing something to a rope	143
'A clown, he wears clown's get-up and does clowning. An angel wears funny clothes, but not a clown's dress'	156
'When I was a child, it was tight'	171
'He is a great musician, and he is also the great tumbler'	191
'You ought to see Chris has some of this. Do him good'	230
Lorenzo would not waltz	248

CHAPTER I

AUNT REBECCA

PETER and Santa were orphans. When they were babies their father and mother were killed in a railway accident, so they came and lived with their aunt. The aunt's name was Rebecca Possit, but of course they called her Aunt Rebecca. The aunt had been lady's maid to a duchess. This was a good thing, because when the duchess died she left her an annuity, and, as Aunt Rebecca had no other money and neither had the children, it was important. In other ways it was not so good. Being lady's maid to a duchess had made Aunt Rebecca suppose that only dukes and duchesses, and perhaps kings and queens, could be right. She never did or said anything without first thinking how 'Her Grace' would have said or done it. As the duchess's sayings and doings had been rather a bore, Aunt Rebecca's were too.

What Aunt Rebecca said and did would not have mattered much to Peter and Santa because, of course, they were interested in their own things, but most unluckily the duchess had a great many grandchildren who had often been to stay at Plyst (pronounced 'Pleat'), where the duchess had spent most of her time. How Peter and Santa suffered from the duchess's grandchildren!

'I don't believe anything nice ever happened to that awful Lady Marigold or Lady Moira or those horrible Manliston children,' Santa grumbled.

Peter said:

'It's all very well for you to make a fuss, but you don't have that dreadful Lord Bronedin pushed down your throat all day.'

Santa had fair hair which hung right down to her waist. It